

LETTERS

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Consider two medical patients, each diagnosed with terminal illness — one cancer and the other with dementia: Throughout the course of their illnesses, each will suffer pain and discomfort, each will suffer the indignities of being unable to manage their own bodily functions; and, depending upon their financial situation, each may drive their families into poverty. Lastly, each of these individuals have stated a desire to die with dignity.

The cancer patient's prognosis has been determined to be less than six months until death, allowing this individual to take advantage of Oregon's death with dignity law. The second patient does not have an equivalent option. While this dementia patient also desires the option of death with dignity to end his life when he chooses, he is prevented from doing so because, as his disease progresses, he likely will not have the cognitive capacity to be fully aware of his condition during the last six months to verify affirmatively with full knowledge this right to die. The cancer patient, mostly coherent, can state with authority his wish to die; whereas the second patient is diagnosed with dementia and an indeterminate number of months or years to live.

How is this fair?

This sets up an interesting circumstance. The dementia patient's prognosis is that he may live for a year or longer, a future guaranteed to be filled with the indignities and pain associated with his diagnosis of dementia — Oregon's death with dignity law is of no help. His only escape from such a painful and dismal future, not to mention dire financial impact on his family, is to take his own life without assistance from the medical community or others. Because the last stages of dementia can stretch out for much longer than six months, people with dementia do not qualify for "death with dignity" laws.

The law excludes patients with dementia and degenerative brain diseases, since they are deemed unable to make decisions for themselves at the end of life. Therefore, patients with advanced dementia only have one pathway for creating an end of life plan; the advanced directive. An advanced directive is a plan of care detailing what an individual would like the medical care team to do or *not* do in situations where death is imminent.

The "Death with Dignity" law does not consider the suffering and pain that the person with advanced dementia faces at the end of their life. The law needs to be modified to include these patients and create

provisions for honoring their wishes to an end of life that is dignified and meaningful to them and their families.

Bill Kemp



To the Editor:

Thank you, *Nugget* Editor Jim Cornelius, for once again being a beacon of rational thought in this wild and crazy time ("*The power to shame and silence*," *The Nugget*, January 20, page 2).

The current cancel culture makes Joe McCarthy's livelihood-destroying, old-school smear and black-listing tactics seem benign by comparison. Today mere disagreement is enough to cause one to lose one's job. Censoring? Unless this inexorable slide is checked, Big Tech will not stop at silencing Twitter accounts: Imagine the day when cell phone numbers are selectively disabled because HAL does not approve of who is talking to whom.

It is beyond chilling to see what is going on in our society. Americans need to live together with respect and tolerance despite our often profound and vigorous political disagreement.

Jane Poss



To the Editor:

This letter is in response to S. McMillan's letter of January 20. As the editor noted, the writer used 2020 statistics that only included 11 months of data, and then compared them with previous years' 12-month figures. This led the author to the incorrect conclusion that Oregon's death toll in 2020 was less than 2019.

If you annualize the 2020 data for 11 months you would find that the estimated annual Oregon death toll should be approximately 39,313. (It does not appear that actual 2020 total death data has been published yet by the state.)

If you go with that logic, that would make the 2020 increase over 2019 equal 1,916 additional deaths. According to oregonlive.com, 2020 Oregon COVID deaths were 1,477.

It seems pretty clear from these stats that Oregon has had more deaths, and that increase can largely be attributed to COVID-19.

Karen Lord



To the Editor:

In light of the ensuing violence (continuing still in Portland), also with multiple crimes committed (including loss of life), it might help bolster "public confidence" that the letters of outrage currently

being written are not focused solely on acts of violence connected to the Capitol riot that occurred January 6, 2021, but rather, address this type of violence anywhere in our nation.

The nation's public has been told repeatedly (almost daily) that the violent protests held in many cities around the country since summer 2020 were expressions of free speech. Janet Keen states at the end of her letter (printed in the January 13, edition), "I fully respect and defend all lawful expressions of our First Amendment rights related to freedom of speech, but the violent mob and the deadly events that unfolded were unlawful and should be confronted swiftly and decisively. Law and order applies to *all* Americans; no one is above the law."

I would add that swift and decisive action can only appropriately occur following thorough and honest investigation, which cannot possibly have been completed as of the time her letter was submitted for print. Law and order should apply to all Americans, but the inconsistent legal responses to violent events of 2020 alone remind us that law and order is not being equally applied.

Sadly, her letter appears to champion what reads as a proposed witch hunt among our own local law enforcement officers precisely because of her expressed horror and outrage (first paragraph) related to the events at the nation's capitol.

If this is Ms. Keen's first expression of horror and outrage at violent protests without also condemning similar violent protests occurring within our own state (or other states), then her letter misses the mark.

Selective outrage about violence does not sway opinion in a helpful manner. And, most concerning, is that her outrage certainly appears to be inappropriately and unnecessarily aimed at local law enforcement officers who are serving our Central Oregon communities.

Louise Larson



To the Editor:

To all who voted for Joe Biden, you must be proud. We have the cleanest air and water and we were energy independent. Closing the pipe line not only destroyed thousands of jobs, but made Canada angry.

We will have higher taxes, higher gasoline prices, our groceries will go up, shopping online will go up. The rich do not care, but it is going to hurt the average American like you and I. We need to pray for our country as we are losing our liberties.

Patsy Farr

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VIRTUAL Calendar

Things to participate in online while staying safely at home.

JAN 27 WED
Deschutes Public Library: Karyn Ann Patridge Performs Indie-Soul/Folk 5 p.m. Portland-based singer-songwriter. Go to www.deschuteslibrary.org/calendar/.
Deschutes Public Library: The Library Book Club at Sisters 5:30 p.m. Discuss "An American Marriage" by Tayari Jones. Go to www.deschuteslibrary.org/calendar/.
Deschutes Land Trust January Nature Night: A Closer Look at Microplastics 7 p.m. Dr. Susanne Brander of OSU will explore the world of microplastics and what we can do to stem the plastic tide. Free registration required at www.deschuteslandtrust.org.

FEB 4 THUR
League of Women Voters of Deschutes County: First Thursday Meeting 11:30 a.m. Zoom meeting about issues relating to life on the Warm Springs Reservation. Meeting info available at www.lwvdeschutes.org/first-thursday-luncheons.
Deschutes Public Library: Book Challenge 5:30 p.m. Discover new ways to track your reading flow with Community Librarians, Paige Bentley-Flannery and Rya Fennwald. Go to www.deschuteslibrary.org/calendar/.
Deschutes Public Library: Habitat Restoration 6 p.m. Learn about the Upper Deschutes Water Council and their restoration along Whychus Creek. Registration is required at www.deschuteslibrary.org/calendar/.

FEB 8 MON
Deschutes Public Library: Beginning Tai Chi 6 p.m. Beginners' class with Master JianFeng Chen. Registration is required at www.deschuteslibrary.org/calendar/.